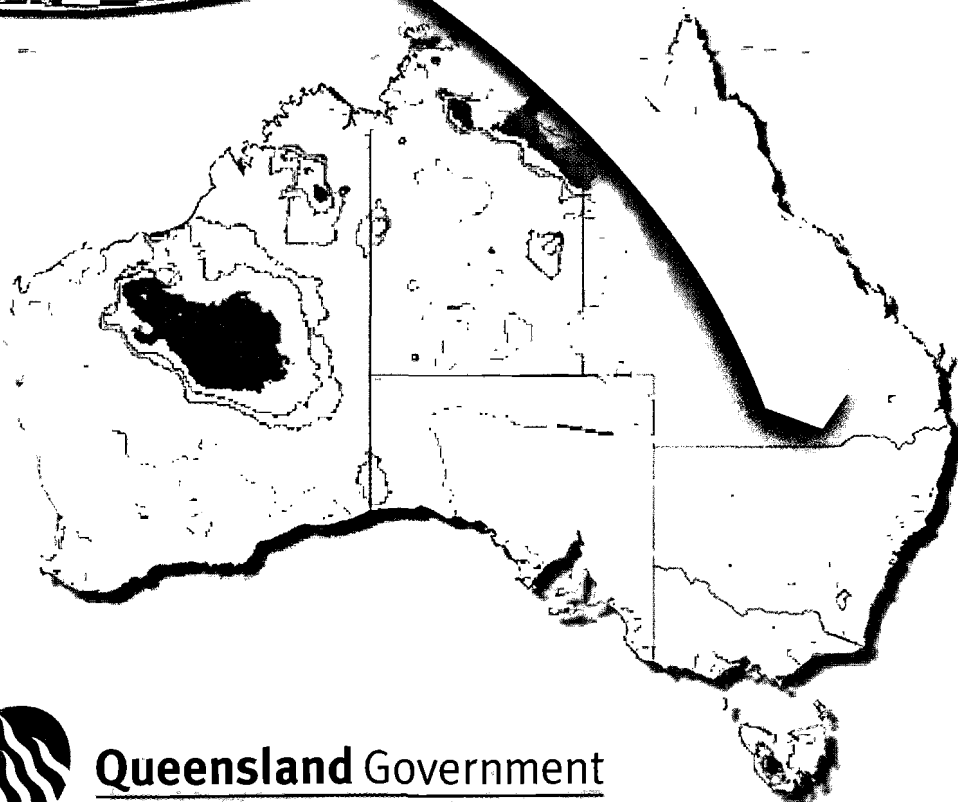
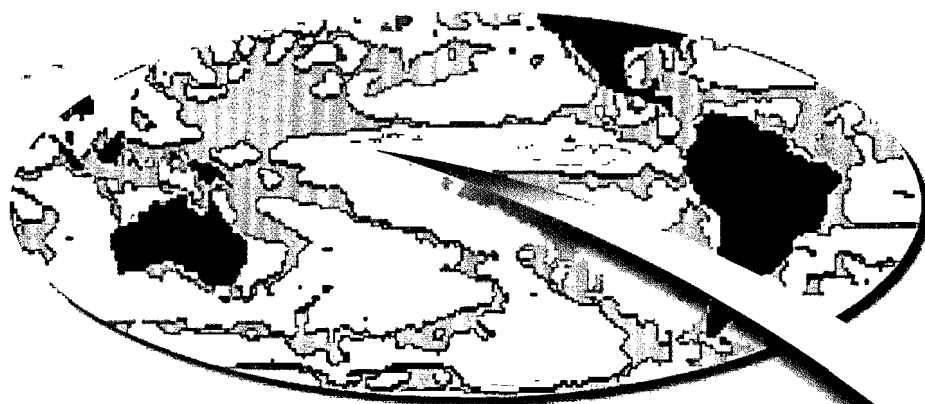




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Science for drought

Proceedings of the National Drought Forum
Brisbane, April 2003



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Queensland Government
Department of Primary Industries

Science for drought

Proceedings of the National Drought Forum

Brisbane, April 2003

Edited by Roger Stone and Ian Partridge

Department of Primary Industries Queensland

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Department of Primary Industries, Toowoomba
and held in the
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University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba.

The Department of Primary Industries seeks a better quality of life for all Queenslanders—a quality of life supported by innovative world-class food and fibre industries, by responsible and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources and by capable and self-reliant rural communities.

Our business is about:

- innovative science and commercial uptake of new technology by food and fibre industries
- sustainable use of natural resources
- food safety and protection against imported pests and diseases
- market-driven and ethical food and fibre production
- capable rural communities achieving prosperity and self-reliance through successful rural businesses.

This publication provides information to scientists to improve sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable primary production in a highly variable climate.

While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, the State of Queensland accepts no responsibility for decisions or actions taken as a result of any data, information, statement or advice, expressed or implied, contained in these proceedings.

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Enquiries should be addressed to:

Manager, DPI Publications
Department of Primary Industries
GPO Box 46
Brisbane Qld 4001

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Contributors

Department of Primary Industries, Queensland

Agricultural Production Systems Research Unit, PO Box 102, Toowoomba 4350

Fred Chudleigh fred.chudleigh@dpi.qld.gov.au
Howard Cox howard.cox@dpi.qld.gov.au
Graeme Hammer graeme.hammer@dpi.qld.gov.au
Holger Meinke holger.meinke@dpi.qld.gov.au

Farming Systems Institute, MS 508, Warwick, Qld 4370

Andrew Borrell andrew.borrell@dpi.qld.gov.au
Bob Henzell bob.henzell@dpi.qld.gov.au
David Jordan david.r.jordan@dpi.qld.gov.au

Queensland Beef Industry Institute

PO Box 6014, North Rockhampton Qld 4702

Richard Holroyd richard.holroyd@dpi.qld.gov.au
Animal Research Institute, LMB 4, Moorooka Qld 4105
Michael Quirk michael.quirk@dpi.qld.gov.au
PO Box 967, Charters Towers, Qld 4820
Peter O'Reagain peter.o'reagain@dpi.qld.gov.au

Queensland Centre for Climate Applications, PO Box 102, Toowoomba, Qld 4350

Yahya Abawi yahya.abawi@dpi.qld.gov.au
David Cobon david.cobon@dpi.qld.gov.au
Ian Partridge ian.partridge@dpi.qld.gov.au
Andries Potgieter andries.potgieter@dpi.qld.gov.au
Gordon Simpson gordon.simpson@dpi.qld.gov.au
Roger Stone roger.stone@dpi.qld.gov.au

80 Meiers Road, Indooroopilly, Qld 4068

Col Paull colin.paull@nrm.qld.gov.au

Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland

Natural Resource Sciences Centre, 80 Meiers Road, Indooroopilly Qld 4068

incorporating the Queensland Centre for Climate Applications

David Ahrens david.ahrens@nrm.qld.gov.au
Ken Brook ken.brook@nrm.qld.gov.au
Dorine Bruget dorine.bruget@nrm.qld.gov.au
John Carter john.carter@nrm.qld.gov.au
Steve Crimp steve.crimp@nrm.qld.gov.au
Ken Day ken.day@nrm.qld.gov.au
Sunil Dutta sunil.dutta@nrm.qld.gov.au
Neil Flood neil.flood@nrm.qld.gov.au
Robert Hassett robert.hassett@nrm.qld.gov.au
Beverley Henry beverley.henry@nrm.qld.gov.au
Greg McKeon greg.mckeon@nrm.qld.gov.au
John Ritchie john.ritchie@nrm.qld.gov.au
Jozef Syktus jozef.syktus@nrm.qld.gov.au
Grant Stone grant.stone@nrm.qld.gov.au

Natural Resource Sciences Centre, PO Box 318, Toowoomba Qld 4350

David Freebairn david.freebairn@nrm.qld.gov.au
Jyoteshna Owens jyoteshna.owens@nrm.qld.gov.au

NSW Agriculture, RMB 944, Calala Lane, Tamworth, NSW 2340

Joshua Gordon joshua.gordon@agric.nsw.gov.au
Peter Hayman peter.hayman@agric.nsw.gov.au

Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, GPO Box 1289K, Melbourne, Vic 3001

Bureau of Meteorology Research Centre

Oscar Alves o.alves@bom.gov.au
Rob Colman r.colman@bom.gov.au
Neville Nicholls n.nicholls@bom.gov.au
Scott Power s.power@bom.gov.au
Neville Smith n.smith@bom.gov.au
Faina Tzeitkin f.tzeitkin@bom.gov.au
Guomin Wang g.wang@bome.gov.au
Xiandong Wang x.wang@bom.gov.au
Graham Warren g.warren@bom.gov.au
Aihong Zhong a.zhong@bom.gov.au

National Climate Centre

Michael Coughlan m.coughlan@bom.gov.au
Robert Fawcett r.fawcett@bom.gov.au
David Jones d.jones@bom.gov.au
William Wright w.wright@bom.gov.au

CSIRO

CSIRO, Atmospheric Research, 107 Station Street, Aspendale Vic 3096

Wenju Cai wenju.cai@csiro.au
Ian Smith ian.smith@csiro.au
Ramasamy Suppiah ramasamy.suppiah@csiro.au
Penny Whetton penny.whetton@csiro.au

CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems GPO Box 284, Canberra ACT 2602

Mark Howden mark.howden@csiro.au

CSIRO Marine Research, Hobart

Stuart Godfrey stuart.godfrey@csiro.au
Gary Meyers gary.meyers@csiro.au
Andreas Schiller andreas.schiller@csiro.au

Monash University, PO Box 28M, Clayton Vic 3800

Karl Braganza karl.braganza@maths.monash.edu.au
Anna Reynolds areynolds@wwf.org.au
James Risbey james.risbey@sci.monash.edu.au

James Cook University, Townsville, Qld 4810

Yvette Everingham yvette.everingham@jcu.edu.au

Australian Institute of Marine Science, PMB 3, Townsville Mail Centre Qld 4810

Janice Lough j.lough@aims.gov.au

Bureau of Rural Science, Edmund Barton Building, Barton ACT 2601

John Sims john.sims@brs.gov.au

Meat and Livestock Australia, Locked Bag 991, North Sydney NSW 2059

Wayne Hall w.hall@mla.com.au

Western Australian Department of Agriculture

Centre for Management of Arid Environments, PO Box 483, Northam WA 6401

Ian Watson

International Research Institute for Climate Prediction, New York, USA

Lisa Goddard

School of Meteorology, University of Oklahoma, 100E Boyd Street, Norman OK73019 USA

David Karoly d.karoly@ou.edu

Foreword

This has been an historic forum. For the first time in almost thirteen years scientists have come from all over Australia to present scientific research that is focussed directly on drought issues.

The current drought has once again shown the devastating impacts our variable climate can have. The lesson we must all take from it is that preparation, forward planning and risk management are critical.

A recent survey has found that nearly 40% of Australian farmers have adopted seasonal forecasts. This rate of take-up may seem low, but it has been achieved in a little over a decade since regular seasonal forecasts became available.

Many farmers will come out of the current drought with greater interest and questioning of the climate forecast information available to them, and this will be a challenge and opportunity for our researchers.

There is a general appreciation among farmers of the value of climate and rainfall data to their business, but there remains a reluctance amongst many to input that data and information into their decision-making.

One issue for research organisations is to present information in which producers can have confidence and which they can access and use with relative ease.

The DPI and the wider Queensland Government places much emphasis on the incorporation of climate forecasting into production and natural resource management systems. This integration and the development of modelling and decision support software are the future of sustainable farming in Australia.

The State Government through the Queensland Centre for Climate Applications has had a strong relationship with the Climate Variability in Agriculture Program which has funded many research and development projects.

The Climate Variability in Agriculture Program has been a major sponsor in this science forum bringing together leading scientists from the Queensland Government, the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Australian universities, the Bureau of Rural Sciences and State agricultural departments.

The outcomes from this forum will be presented to key decision makers within Federal and State governments, industry associations and all those involved in drought policy. Its implementation will form the basis for a major review of better preparing this country for drought.

The Honourable Henry Palaszczuk MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities